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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to survey the large primarily white universities concerning freshmen entering in the fall of 1971 in order to note trends and changes in enrollment and admissions predictors. Sample population included black, American Indian, and Spanish Surname students. Returns were received from 99 percent of the admissions officers at institutions surveyed. Three year trends which have emerged indicate that black freshmen enrollment has leveled off to 4 percent in 1970 and 1971, after a rise from 3 percent in 1969. Despite the apparent intentions of many colleges and universities, fewer blacks are entering college. This study was intended: (1) to examine the amount of social change in our society as reflected by the number of blacks and other minority students entering primarily white universities as freshmen; and (2) to determine what universities are actually employing in selecting black and other minority students in order to shed light on the relationship between research and practice. (Authors/SB)

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William E. Sedlacek, Glenwood C. Brooks, Jr.,
and Lester A. Mindus

Research Report # 3-72

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SUMMARY

A national survey of the minority student admissions policies and practices of large, primarily white universities was conducted for the third consecutive year. Returns were received from 109 of 110 (99%) of the admissions officers at institutions surveyed. Three year trends which have emerged indicate that black freshman enrollment has leveled off to 4% in 1970 and 1971 after a rise from 3% in 1969. Information from other studies indicates that black freshman enrollment in all types of institutions (four year colleges, community colleges, etc.) is down from 9% in 1970 to 6% in 1971. Thus despite the apparent intentions of many colleges and universities, fewer blacks are entering college. Universities continued to employ a variety of admissions criteria for all students although 80% employ high school record and standardized tests alone. Special programs for black and other minority students existed at 60% of the schools in 1971 compared to 52% in 1970 and 48% in 1969. Evidence of some concern for minorities other than blacks was provided in that 25% of the schools with special programs had some American Indians or Spanish Surname students enrolled. However, the writers stress that results, not intentions, are the yardstick of change. Currently the record of institutions of higher education in the U.S. is poor.

Monitoring the entry of black and other minority students into large universities is important for at least two socially significant reasons. First, the numbers of blacks entering these universities as freshmen is a barometer of change in the society. As the issue of institutional racism is raised throughout our society and in particular our educational system, it is important that we pause periodically to see how we are doing. It is also important that we are not lulled into a false sense of change because of the ballyhoo and "good intentions" or concern shown by many. *Results, not intentions, should be the yardstick of progress.* It is particularly important to watch changes in enrollment at large universities since, as a group, they enroll 35% of the nation's undergraduates (U.S. Office of Education, 1970). Also large universities have been traditionally white institutions, often more selective and with more facilities and resources than other institutions. Thus changes in minority enrollment in universities is an index of the extent to which the society is providing its major educational resources for minority students.

A second important reason for studying black and other minority admissions to universities is to examine the predictors used in admitting such students. The issue of the cultural fairness of commonly used predictors has been widely studied and discussed (e.g., Thomas and Stanley, 1969; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1971; Sampel and Seymour, 1971; DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972). However, the writers feel relatively little creative research has been conducted in the area and contradictory or unexplained findings abound. A systematic check on what universities are actually employing in selecting black and other students should shed some light on the relationship between research and practice.

Sedlacek and Brooks (1970) and Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz (1972) have conducted national surveys of black admissions at large universities for classes

entering in the fall of 1969 and 1970. They found that the median percent of black freshmen in large universities went from 3% in 1969 to 4% in 1970. Additionally, in 1970 more schools used recommendations, extracurricular activities and interviews and less used standardized tests and high school grades alone as predictors for all students, including blacks, compared to 1969. Additionally, they found little change in the number of schools employing open admissions (10% in 1969 and 12% in 1970).

The purpose of the current study was to survey the large universities concerning freshmen entering in the fall of 1971 to note trends and changes in enrollment and admissions predictors used. Also, since a number of admissions officers expressed interest in a survey of admissions for other minorities such as American Indians and Spanish Surname students, information on these groups was sought in the 1971 survey.

Method

The admissions offices of 110 institutions were sent a questionnaire concerning their minority admissions policies. The institutions sampled were large, primarily white schools throughout the United States. Schools in the major athletic conferences and large, independent institutions were included in the sample. If an individual state (including the District of Columbia) were not represented by the sampling method used, the largest school in the state was included. The questionnaires were mailed out in November, 1971 and telephone follow-up procedures resulted in a total return of 109 questionnaires (99%). The questionnaire contained items nearly identical to those used in the 1970 survey aside from a slight editorial change in item 2, as well as the addition of an item dealing with American Indians and Spanish Surname Americans. Of the 109 schools reporting, 88 (81%) were public and 21 (19%) were private.

Results

The questionnaire items and answers are given below. Open ended comments are reported in the Discussion section.

1. *What is your approximate undergraduate enrollment? About how many new freshmen matriculated this fall? About how many of your newly matriculated freshmen are black?*

Table 1 shows the range of enrollment, total enrollment, and black enrollment by six geographical regions for schools in the sample. The regions are based on the regional accrediting associations reported in the *Higher Education Directory* of the U.S. Office of Education. The median total enrollment was 11,536 while median freshman enrollment was 2,326 and median black freshman enrollment was 74. The median percent of black freshmen was 4 percent.

These results compare with a median total enrollment of 11,000, a median freshman enrollment of 2,450, a median black freshman enrollment of 77, and a 4% median percent of black freshmen from the 1970 survey (Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz, 1972). The 1969 survey (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970) showed slightly smaller enrollments and only 3% black freshmen.

2. *Briefly describe your regular admissions criteria for new freshmen.*

Table 2 shows that High School Average (HSA), High School Rank (HSR) and standardized tests remain as the most commonly employed admissions criteria used by schools. Recommendations are used by 36 (33%) of the schools and extra-curricular activities and interviews are used infrequently. Only 13 (12%) had open admissions, which is defined as requiring only a high school diploma or its equivalent for entry.

All the figures in Table 2 agree closely with those from the 1970 survey (Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz, 1972). For instance, in 1970 34% used

recommendations and 12% had open admissions. Additionally, 87 (80%) of the schools reported using either HSA or HSR combined with SAT or ACT tests in 1971. This compares to 82% in 1970 and 99% in 1969. Also, 39 (36%) schools used four or more admissions criteria in 1971 compared to 29% in 1970 and 6% in 1969.

3. *Do you have special programs in which blacks (or mostly blacks) are enrolled? If yes, please briefly describe the criteria for admission to the program(s).*

Table 3 shows that 65 schools (60%) had special programs in which mostly blacks were enrolled compared to 52% in 1970 and 48% in 1969. Forty-four of the 45 schools responding (98%) admitted freshmen to their special programs using admissions criteria that were either different or weighted differently than those for regular freshman admissions. As in the previous two surveys the most commonly used criteria for blacks in special programs were HSA, HSR, SAT or ACT and recommendations.

4. *Aside from special programs, are blacks admitted under the same criteria as are all regular new freshmen?*

Twenty-two (20%) of the 109 schools used different regular admissions criteria for blacks in 1971 compared to 36% in 1970 and 45% in 1969. "Different criteria of admission" was generally interpreted by admissions officers as referring to different applications or cutoff points of the same variables used in regular admissions. Fourteen of the 22 schools deemphasized tests and eight of these 14 schools specifically weighted standardized tests less heavily as their only admissions criterion difference for blacks.

Table 4 shows much of the survey data broken down by type of institution (public or private). Results indicate that private schools tend to be smaller, to enroll a greater percentage of black freshmen, to use different admissions criteria for blacks and to have more special programs for blacks and other minorities (American Indians, Spanish Surname students). The primary change

from 1970 is the private school shift from 45% with special programs for blacks in 1970 compared to 67% in 1971. This compares to 54% in 1970 and 58% in 1971 for public universities.

An item on the questionnaire specifically asked about programs and admissions criteria for American Indians and Spanish Surname students. Programs specifically for such students existed at nine (8%) of the schools with another four schools reporting programs partially underway. However, 25% of the schools with special programs indicated that they included some American Indian or Spanish Surname students. Three schools reported having recruiters for Spanish Surname students, and two schools had programs serving mainly poor whites. Ten (9%) of the respondents indicated that their special programs were nonracial or nonethnic and criteria of admission were primarily economic and educational. The writers recognize the concern of admissions officers and educators over the goals of their programs. However, the purpose of this study was to examine the actual enrollment of blacks and other minorities, rather than to state the philosophy of the programs.

Discussion

Several significant trends over the three years of the survey are worth comment. First, the rise in new black freshman enrollment from 3% in 1969 to 4% in 1970 leveled off and held at 4% in 1971. All regions of the country were virtually identical in 1970 and 1971 in their black enrollment patterns. The results of the present study agree with those of the American Council on Education (1971) who report that 3.8% of the freshmen entering universities in 1971 are black (Negro-Afro American) compared to 3.6% in 1970. They also report only 6.3% of the freshmen in all U.S. institutions in 1971 are black compared to 9.1% in 1970. So it does not appear that blacks were attending other types of

institutions rather than universities. Thus the idea of hordes of black and other minority students descending on colleges and universities and great expansion in minority enrollment seems to be a myth. This is particularly important since 15% of the students enrolled in U.S. secondary schools in 1970 were black and another 6% were American Indians, Spanish Surnamed or Oriental (Lerner, 1971). Astin (1970 p.90) comments "Given the current economic chasm between blacks and whites, one could argue that the proportion of blacks going on to higher education should, for a period of time, be even *greater* than the proportion of whites. Instead, we have a situation where the economic gap is likely to widen with time. The undesirable social consequences that are likely to result from this increasing discrepancy can be avoided only if higher educational institutions are prepared to undertake major crash programs that will greatly increase the proportion of black students who go on to college."

A second trend noted from 1969 to 1970 seems to have leveled off from 1970 to 1971: the use of predictors other than standardized tests and high school grades alone. Eighty-seven (80%) of the 109 schools reported using either HSA or HSR combined with the SAT or ACT as total predictors compared with 82% in 1970 and 99% in 1969. This leveling off is likely related to the continuing trend that fewer schools are using different predictors for blacks and whites for regular admissions. Thus what seems to have happened in the last few years is that universities have reduced the problem of deciding on separate predictors for races by applying a broader range of predictors to all applicants. This is consistent with the finding that open admissions remained constant at 10 or 12%. Astin (1970, p.92) has advanced the argument that "the low representation of black freshmen and the *de facto* racial segregation that exists in many colleges is attributable in part to the use, in the admissions process, of high school grades and, in particular, of scores on tests of academic ability." Thus, one

would think that the broader range of predictors used for all applicants would increase the black freshman enrollment; but this has not occurred.

Another three year trend has been the growth of special programs in which mostly blacks were enrolled. This was especially true in private institutions. Thus while the overall enrollment of blacks was holding constant, more blacks were being enrolled in special programs. The biggest potential problem with such trends is that more blacks will be labeled and stigmatized as different or needing "special help" or being "second class." While many special programs are needed, the writers feel that universities must continue to increase black enrollment through regular channels. Using new and innovative recruiting methods, improved and coordinated financial aid programs and use of new and more appropriate predictors are but a few changes that appear needed.

Astin (1971) has presented arguments supporting the advantages of having diverse student bodies in institutions rather than homogeneous grouping of students. University officials might argue that they are doing what they can and if blacks don't come they don't come. Also some admissions officers reported that since the government did not require them to keep track of black entrants they did not keep such records. While such policies may have arguments in their favor, the writers feel that they serve as classic "copout" positions. The writers feel that a racial census is important to the integrity of any institution. Someday racial identification may not be necessary but in 1972 it is a vital way of determining the outcome of any efforts or programs by the institution. While a racial census is difficult it is possible and may even generate some positive side effects such as better relations between races or students and faculty (see Brooks and Sedlacek, 1972).

There is a vast potential of untapped ability existing among black and other minority U.S. citizens. A great deal more effort could be made by many schools to attract and retain blacks and other minorities to our primarily white universities. This includes increased moral and financial commitments by governing boards and administrations. If recruiting efforts are seen as stopgap measures prompted by political pressure, many minority students will not be reached. Also efforts by students and faculty such as student speakers bureaus and departmental recruiting programs are possible without the sanction of the governing board or administration. Several recent studies have identified potentially new predictors for blacks that should be experimentally implemented (DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1973). The variables were empirically identified but relate to a concept of "social maturity": being independent, self assured and able to handle difficult adjustments. The actual use of such predictors must be implemented to fully assess their predictive utility.

The writers were encouraged with the increased awareness of many of the institutions in the survey regarding minorities. It is hoped that these intentions will result in large changes in higher education in the United States; so far the change is very small. But efforts must be increased and continued, for change is never easy, especially when a society is at stake.

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TABLE 2

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 109 Schools (Question 2)

Schools by Region	*N*	Admissions Criteria: Open Admissions	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Ach. Tests	State/ Local Tests	Extra-curr. Activities	Recommendations	Interview	Predicted GPA	Preference to Local Res.	Preference to Alumni/ Family
North Central	37	4	15	30	19	18	2	1	2	8	2		1	2
Southern	28	1	19	16	20	8	3	2	4	13	2	4	1	
Middle States	21	3	13	18	16	5	2	5	3	8	2	1		
Northwest	12	5	7	4	4	6						2		
New England	6		3	5	6		2		3	5			1	1
Western	5		5	3	5	2	3		1	2				
Totals	109	13	62	76	70	39	12	8	13	36	6	7	3	3

TABLE 3

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 109 Schools
to Select Black Students to Special Programs (Question 3)

Schools by Region	*N*	Admissions Criteria										
		Spec. Programs *N*	Spec. Prog. Local Res. Only	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Ach. Tests	State or Local Tests	Extra-curr. Activities	Recommendations	Interview
North Central	37	23	3	7	6	5	5	1	1	2	4	3
Southern	28	12	2	3	2	3					4	1
Middle States	21	19	4	5	7	4				1	4	3
Northwest	12	6		2	1		1		1			
New England	6	3									1	1
Western	5	2									2	2
Totals	109	65	9	17	16	12	6	1	2	3	15	10

TABLE 4

Survey Data by Type of Institution

	N	Range of Total Enroll.	Median Total Enroll.	Median Fresh. Enroll.	Median Black Fresh. Enroll.	Median % of Black Fresh. Enroll.	% with Special Programs Primarily for Blacks	% Using Different Criteria for Blacks	% Doing Research on Black Admissions	% with Indians or Spanish-Surnames in a Program	% with Program Specific to Indians or Spanish-Surnames
Public	88	2,450-40,197	13,771	2,784	100	4	58	13	44	23	9
Private	21	2,023-10,900	5,586	1,433	60	6	67	52	57	33	5
Total	109	2,023-40,197	11,536	2,326	74	4	60	20	47	25	8